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Market Classes and Grades of Livestock

By the
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Market Classes and Grades of Livestock

By the Agricultural Marketing Administration [1]

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing livestock according to their merits or relative values has been recognized for many years in the United States as a sound practice but it has not always been strictly observed. Although standards for the market classes and grades for livestock did not exist before the turn of the century, there was a voluntary movement among the various markets to develop classifications and suitable descriptive terms for the classes, groups, and grades of the various kinds of market livestock. There was a tendency, however, for each market to develop classifications and adopt terms peculiar to itself. Many of the classifications that were thus developed lacked similarity in many essential respects.

Furthermore, even when identical terms were used at different markets to describe selected groups of animals, such terms often did not indicate animals with similar characteristics or values. Not only did the significance of a term vary among the different markets but also among individuals on the same market and often with the same individual on the same market at different seasons of the year. Consid-

[1] Department Bulletin No. 1360 was first prepared by C. E. Gibbons and was issued as a contribution from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in 1926. Mr. Gibbons is no longer connected with the work, which is now a part of the Agricultural Marketing Administration. This completely revised bulletin was prepared by L. B. Burk, marketing specialist, and C. V. Whalin, senior marketing specialist, Agricultural Marketing Administration.

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erable confusion and misunderstanding often resulted when producers and market interests attempted to compare markets. This unsatisfactory condition indicated an urgent need for a single set of standards for the market classes and grades of each kind of livestock.

Sensing a demand for uniform standards, the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Illinois attempted to formulate and describe a basis for them in the early part of this century. The results of these investigations were published by the experiment station in Bulletin No. 78, Market Classes and Grades of Cattle, by H. W. Mumford in 1902, in Bulletin No. 97, Market Classes and Grades of Swine, by William Dietrich in 1904, and in Bulletin No. 129, Market Classes and Grades of Sheep, by W. C. Coffey in 1908.

The need for national standards was emphasized when, in 1916, the United States Department of Agriculture was authorized to report market conditions and transactions at the various livestock markets in the United States. Since there were no national standards for livestock at that time, the Department, with the cooperation of livestock market interests, State agricultural experiment stations, and producer organizations, undertook to define tentative Federal standards for the market classes and grades of Cattle, Sheep, and Swine. The suggestions contained in the publications of the University of Illinois were used as a basis for the Federal standards.

Since that time these standards have demonstrated their practicality in many ways. They are used continuously by the Agricultural Marketing Administration in conducting a national livestock market news service, in demonstrating the grading of livestock before producer and market groups, and in assembling livestock market statistics for use in analyzing the national livestock situation. Such standards, together with the market terms which were standardized for the various market groups, are not only essential to the proper functioning of a national market news service but they also provide a practical basis for grouping and designating market animals for sale according to their merits or relative market values. Furthermore, each market term associated with each of the various market groups, if used in the standardized sense, has the same significance wherever so used.

Because of the many shifts in the methods of marketing livestock in recent years and especially the tendency to shift marketings from the large central markets to local markets nearer the sources of production, at which markets many producers act as their own salesmen, the need for more general knowledge and use of uniform standards for the market classes and grades of livestock has become more apparent. Few livestock producers now depend upon a single market. They have a choice of many, and select that market or means of sale which promise the greatest net returns when their animals are sold. Under such conditions a prerequisite to a thorough understanding of marketing procedure and to profitable marketing is the knowledge and use by producers and market agencies of uniform standard classes and grades for market livestock in order that they may classify and grade their animals, estimate their approximate values, and sell them accordingly.

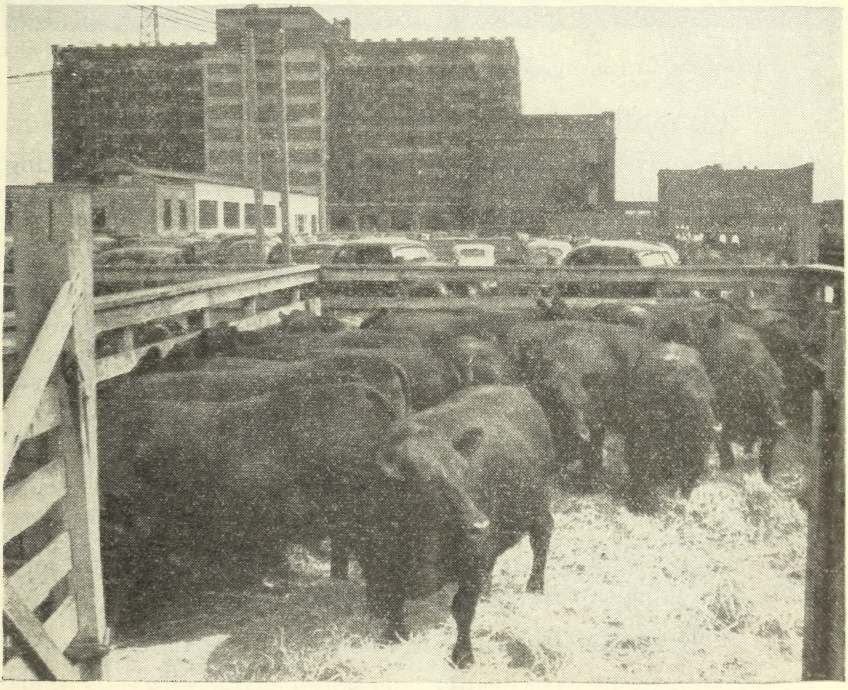
Standards for the market classes and grades of livestock must be suited to the market needs of producers, traders, selling agencies, and slaughterers. They must take into account both the kinds of animals

that are produced and the kinds that are in demand and they must be based largely on fundamental considerations and characteristics that affect values. They must be easily understood, workable, definite, and reasonably permanent.

The purpose of this bulletin is to outline and explain briefly the United States standards for the market classes and grades of the various kinds of livestock commonly used as food animals, and to define or discuss the standard market terms associated with such classes and grades.

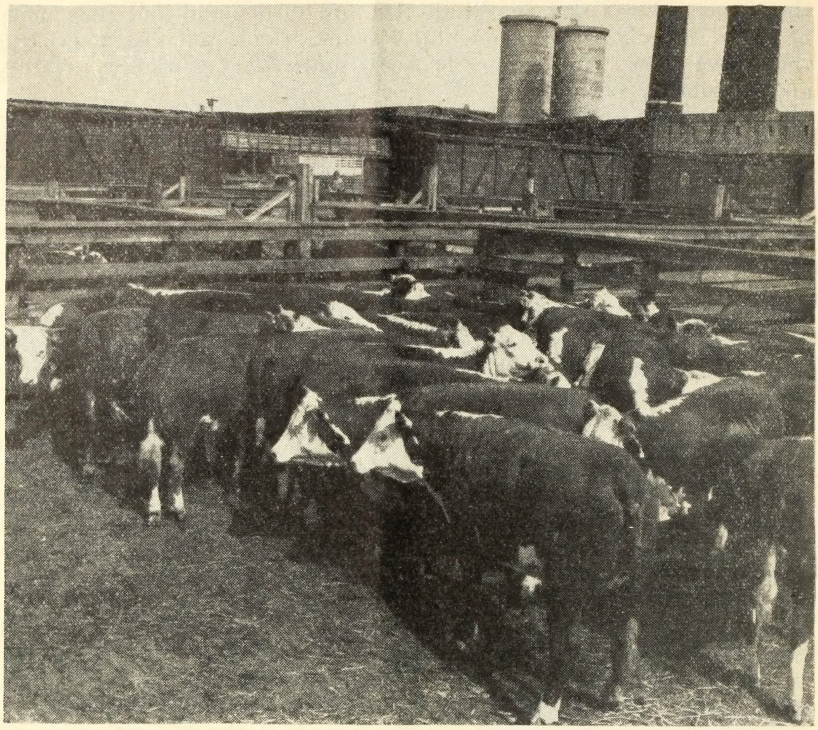
LIVESTOCK MARKET CLASSIFICATIONS

A livestock market classification is a guide for selecting or grouping animals in uniform lots according to certain natural characteristics that affect values. It, in effect, is a schedule or outline with appropriate descriptions and definitions of the various groups commonly recognized and used wherever livestock are offered for sale. A complete classification specifies and describes the kinds of livestock and the purposes for which the animals are to be used or are most suited, as well as the class, age, weight, and grade of each kind. A standard livestock market classification is one that is generally accepted and used, or one that has been established by competent authority, in which each of the various essential market groups of livestock is specifically defined or described, and each is designated by a specific market term that has a standard meaning whenever and wherever properly used (figs. 1 and 2).



AMA 1083

FIGURE 1.—Prime grade Slaughter Steers at a central market.



AMA 1085 D

FIGURE 2.—Choice grade Slaughter Heifers at a central market.

CLASSIFYING AND GRADING LIVESTOCK

Classifying livestock for market purposes is the act of selecting, sorting, or dividing livestock into specific market groups according to natural characteristics. In general market practice the animals are sorted or classified, and sold according to kind, such as Cattle, Sheep, and Swine; according to purpose for which they are intended or are most suitable, such as Slaughter and Feeder Cattle; according to class, such as Steers, Barrows, and Ewes; according to a general age group, such as Calves, Lambs, Yearlings, and 2-Year-Olds; according to weight; and finally, according to grade, such as Prime, Choice, and Good.

Grading livestock is the act of sorting or dividing animals of similar class, age, and weight according to the relative degree of excellence of the individual animal or group of animals. When standard grades are used for this purpose, the animals so graded are reasonably uniform in all essential respects. Each individual in a grade group is quite similar to other individuals in that group and all are quite similar to other individuals of the same grade at any other market.

PURPOSES OF CLASSIFYING AND GRADING

No two animals are exactly alike in essential characteristics of which there are many in each kind of livestock. The possible variations in

these characteristics are limited only by very wide extremes and are reflected in corresponding variations in market prices.

The immediate purpose of classifying and grading livestock for market is to select and group the animals so that they will present the greatest possible uniformity within the group and so that each animal in any group will make a near approach to a standard which has been established for that group. The ultimate objectives are to make possible a reasonably accurate determination of values and an intelligible description, or reporting of market transactions. Obviously the most satisfactory results are obtained when the same standards are used uniformly throughout the country.

More specifically, the purposes of classifying and grading livestock are: (1) To provide a means of selling animals according to their values; (2) to enable the purchaser to buy the class and grade desired without being required to accept animals he does not want; (3) to provide a basis for more accurate and useful market reports regarding current market receipts and prices; (4) to provide a guide for producers in their breeding and feeding operations; (5) to enable producers, buyers, and traders to make more reliable comparisons of prices at different markets; (6) to facilitate the purchase of livestock for slaughter or feeding purposes without a personal inspection of the animals, and (7) to provide a basis for compiling important statistical data used in analytical studies of supplies, demands, prices, and movements of livestock.

STANDARDS FOR CLASSES AND GRADES OF MARKET LIVESTOCK

Standards for the classes and grades of market livestock may be defined as carefully drawn specifications established by authority as a criterion for the measurement, comparison, or judgment of the values of market livestock on the basis of definite degrees of their inherent characteristics that affect the market values of the animals.

Bases for Standards for Livestock

The bases for such standards for each kind of livestock must take into consideration the purposes for which the animals are to be used, their classes, ages, weights, and grades, because each of these exerts an important influence on the market values of livestock. Breed, type, and the care that the animals received are also significant when classifying and grading livestock, but they are taken fully into consideration when each of the basic factors mentioned has been carefully considered and evaluated.

CLASSIFICATION FOR PURPOSE OR USE

The various kinds of livestock are broadly classified according to the purpose for which they are to be used or for which they are best suited. The terms indicating purpose are: "Slaughter," "Feeder," "Stocker," "Milker," "Springer," "Breeder," and "Shearer." The United States standards thus far prepared are for Slaughter, Feeder, and Stocker animals only.

A **Slaughter** animal is one that is intended for immediate slaughter or that is more suitable for slaughter than for any other purpose.

A **Feeder** animal is one that is intended for intensive feeding in preparation for slaughter or one that is more suitable for that purpose than for any other; also one that is on feed.

A **Stocker** animal is one that is intended for further growth by pasturing and rough feeding or one that is more suitable for that purpose than for any other.

A **Milker** is a cow that is giving milk and usually is one that has calved recently.

A **Springer** is a pregnant cow or heifer that is due to calve within a short time.

Breeders are those animals that are suitable and are intended primarily for reproduction purposes. The term is commonly associated with market ewes that are intended for reproduction purposes.

Shearers are sheep or lambs that have a good growth of wool and that are purchased primarily for shearing before they are used for slaughter or other purposes.

CLASSES

The market class for any kind of livestock is determined by its sex or sex condition. The classes for Cattle are: Steer, Heifer, Cow, Bull, and Stag; for Sheep: Ewe, Wether, and Ram; and for Swine; Barrow, Gilt, Sow, Boar, and Stag.

AGES

Market animals generally are sorted or grouped according to approximate ages because many of the essential characteristics that affect values are associated with the different general ranges in ages, such as Vealers, Calves, Yearlings, and 2-Year-Olds in Cattle; as Spring Lambs, Lambs, Yearlings, and Mature Sheep in Sheep; or as Pigs and Hogs in Swine. The age groups indicate approximate ages only, since exactness in this respect is not feasible or material.

WEIGHTS

Market animals generally are grouped according to relatively narrow weight ranges because market values often vary materially with variations in weights. The principal object of grouping market animals within relatively narrow weight ranges is to offer the approximate weights usually desired by the prospective purchasers and thus materially facilitate trading. (See various classification schedules for usual weight ranges.)

GRADES

Grade is the final subdivision in a classification for marketing any kind of livestock and indicates the relative degree of excellence of an animal or group of animals. The standard grade prescribes a relatively narrow but fixed band or segment of the full range of excellence from the very best to the very poorest. The number of grades vary with the different kinds, classes, ages, and weights of livestock and

with the purposes for which they are to be used. (See schedules of market classes and grades for the various kinds of livestock.)

GRADE FACTORS

The grade of an animal is determined by a careful appraisal and evaluation of three grade factors, singly and in combination: conformation, finish, and quality. Each factor is inherent or exists in some degree in every animal and requires careful appraisal and evaluation separately and in combination when determining the true grade. For example, the degree of excellence of one factor may indicate one grade but one or both of the other two factors may be so superior in excellence or so inferior as to change the grade of the animal from that indicated by the first factor or probably by two factors, to the next higher or lower grade.

Conformation is the form, shape, outline, or contour of the animal and includes its degree of symmetry. A desirable conformation implies a high degree of symmetry. The degree of conformation is determined by the proportionate relationships of width, depth, and length of body to each other. It varies both with the outline of frame and fleshing. Although breeding is chiefly responsible for variations in conformation, the sex condition and the quantity and distribution of fat also often affect the build of the animal.

Animals that are wide and deep in proportion to their length, are smooth, are even in outline, and are symmetrical in build have a high degree of conformation. Animals that are very narrow and shallow in proportion to their length, are coarse, and are uneven in body outline have a low degree of conformation.

Conformation in a slaughter animal influences to a considerable extent (1) the percentage of carcass weight in proportion to the live weight of the animal; (2) the percentage relationship of wholesale cuts to the carcass, and (3) the percentage of lean, fat, and bone of the carcass. The conformation of a feeder or stocker animal usually indicates the shape the animal will have when it is finished.

Finish refers to the degree of fatness of an animal, including the quantity and distribution of fat in all parts of the body. Variations in finish are most easily detected by the covering over the different parts of the body and, especially in Cattle and Sheep, where there are no muscles or where the muscles are thin, such as the top of the shoulders, over the back bones, ribs, and pin bones; and by fat deposits on the brisket, around the udder, in the cod, and in the rear flanks. Such fat deposits are closely associated with those over the thicker muscles, inside the thoracic cavity, between the muscles and through the muscular tissues. Finish is dependent somewhat upon inherited tendencies or breeding and, to a certain extent, on sex condition but in the main it depends upon the quantity and kind of feed the animal has consumed during the fattening process.

Degree of finish in a slaughter animal is important because it influences the dressing percentage, the proportion of edible meat to bone, the distribtuion of fat through the muscular tissues (marbling), and the relative desirability of the meat. A thick covering of fat evenly distributed over the body therefore is indicative of a high degree of finish, and a thin covering of fat or its absence indicates a low degree of finish. An uneven distribution of fat or "patchiness" indicates

wastiness and often tends to lower the commercial value of a carcass, especially of a highly finished animal.

Quality in livestock is an inherent property that contributes materially to the degree of excellence or desirability of an animal in relation to the purpose for which the animal is to be used.

The quality of a slaughter animal, together with its conformation and finish, indicates its relative desirability for slaughtering. It also indicates the relative desirability of its meat as human food. Quality in a slaughter animal is indicated by its breeding, refinement, degree of finish, and to some extent by its age and sex condition. The quality of a feeder animal, together with its conformation, condition, and weight in relation to age, indicates its relative suitability for further growth and fattening. The quality of a feeder animal is indicated primarly by its breeding, type, and refinement.

MARKET CLASSIFICATIONS FOR CATTLE

Cattle are domestic animals of the bovine species. In market practice cattle are grouped according to the uses to be made of them, also according to classes, ages, weights, and grades. (See Cattle and Calf Classification Schedules.)

USES

The most common purpose groups for cattle are: Slaughter, Feeder and Stocker, Milker, and Springer. The principal market-use groups into which market cattle are generally classified and for which market classes and grades have been standardized are: Slaughter Cattle and Feeder and Stocker Cattle.

CLASSES

The classes for market cattle are: Steer, Heifer, Cow, Bull, and Stag.

Steer.—A Steer is a male bovine animal that was castrated at an early age or before it had reached sufficient maturity to make reproduction possible or had developed the physical characteristics peculiar to bulls.

Heifer.—A Heifer is a female bovine animal that has not had a calf or has not reached an evident stage of pregnancy, providing it has not developed with age the predominating physical characteristics of a cow.

Cow.—A Cow is a female bovine animal that has had one or more calves or one that has reached an evident stage of pregnancy or one that has not had a calf but has reached maturity and has developed the predominating physical characteristics peculiar to cows.

Bull.—A Bull is an uncastrated male bovine animal of any age.

Stag.—A Stag as applied to cattle is a male bovine animal that was castrated after it had developed the physical characteristics of an adult bull.

AGES

The terms used to indicate approximate age ranges for cattle are: Vealers, Calves, Yearlings, 2-Year-Olds, and older Cattle.

Vealers.—Vealers are very young cattle, usually under 3 months old that have had only or chiefly milk for their diet.

Calves.—Calves are young cattle between the Vealer and Yearling stages. The maximum age limit is officially designated as 12 months. Many calves, however, attain yearling characteristics before they are 1 year old and when they do they are classified generally as yearlings on the market.

Yearling Cattle.—Yearling Cattle are young cattle ranging approximately between 12 and 24 months old.

Two-Year-Olds.—Two-Year-Olds are cattle ranging approximately from 24 to 36 months old.

Three-Year-Olds and Over.—Such cattle include those that are 36 months old and older.

GRADES

The number of grades of cattle vary somewhat with the class, use, age, and weight of the animals, partly because certain groups of animals present a wider range of variations in conformation, finish, and quality than do other groups. For example, Slaughter Steers and Heifers are divided into seven grades: Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, and Canner (figs. 3 and 4)—whereas only six grades apply to Slaughter Cows (fig. 5), Bulls, and Stags. The chief reason for fewer grades for cows, bulls, and stags is that the best of these classes are too deficient in conformation, finish, and quality to be comparable with the best steers or heifers. Hence no provision is made for Prime-grade cows, bulls, or stags.

Two variations from the grade terms of Slaughter Cattle occur in the grade terms for Feeders and Stockers. The highest grade for the latter is called "Fancy" instead of "Prime" and the term "Inferior" is used for the lowest Feeder and Stocker grade. The term "Fancy" is used instead of "Prime" because the term "Prime" is usually associated with a high degree of finish which Feeders and Stockers do not possess. The term "Inferior" refers to an animal of poor breeding and conformation as well as to one in poor condition.

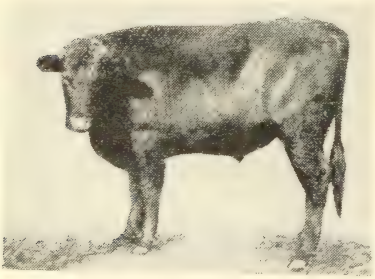
Market Classes and Grades for Slaughter Cattle

Slaughter Cattle are those intended for immediate slaughter or those more suitable for slaughter than for any other purpose. The term includes all cattle that are to be slaughtered for human food. As used here, the term "Slaughter Cattle" excludes slaughter vealers and calves, which are discussed separately. The schedule that follows shows the classes, ages, weights, and grades for Slaughter Cattle. For detailed discussion of the market classes, ages, and weight groups and grades of Slaughter Cattle see Market Classes and Grades of Cattle, Department Bulletin No. 1464.

PRIME

CHOICE

GOOD



MEDIUM

COMMON

CUTTER

CANNER

AMA 1700

FIGURE 3.—United States grades of Slaughter Steers.

PRIME

CHOICE

GOOD

MEDIUM

COMMON

CUTTER

CANNER

AMA

FIGURE 4.—United States grades of Slaughter Heifers.

CHOICE

GOOD

MEDIUM

COMMON

CUTTER

CANNER

AMA 1701

FIGURE 5.—United States grades of Slaughter Cows.

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER CATTLE

Class	Age group	Weight group	Grade
Steers	Yearling	Lightweight, 750 pounds down	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, Canner
		Mediumweight, 750 to 950 pounds	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
		Heavyweight, 950 pounds up	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common
	2 years old and older	Lightweight, 1,100 pounds down	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, Canner
		Mediumweight, 1,100 to 1,300 pounds	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
		Heavyweight, 1,300 pounds up	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
Heifers	Yearling	Lightweight, 750 pounds down	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, Canner
		Mediumweight, 750 to 900 pounds	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
		Heavyweight, 900 pounds up	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common
	2 years old and older	Lightweight, 900 pounds down	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, Canner
		Mediumweight, 900 to 1,050 pounds	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
		Heavyweight, 1,050 pounds up	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter
Cows	All ages	All weights	Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cutter, Canner

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER CATTLE—Con.

Class	Age group	Weight group	Grade
Bulls	Yearling	All weights	Choice Good Medium Common Cutter Canner
	2 years old and older	Lightweight, 1,300 pounds down	Choice Good Medium Common Cutter Canner
		Mediumweight, 1,300 to 1,500 pounds	Choice Good Medium Common
		Heavyweight, 1,500 pounds up	Choice Good Medium Common
Stags	All ages	All weights	Choice Good Medium Common Cutter Canner

Market Classifications for Calves

Calves are young bovine animals under 12 months old. In market practice, however, calves weighing 500 pounds or more are usually classifield as Cattle.

Market calves are divided in two general groups according to the uses to be made of them. They are Slaughter Calves and Feeder and Stocker Calves.

For market purposes, Calves that are intended for immediate slaughter are classified into two general groups: Veal Calves or Vealers and Slaughter Calves. These two groups differ in appearance because of age and the kinds of feed they have received. The terms "Veal Calves," or "Vealers," applies to young calves, usually not more than 3 months of age. Because they have been fed almost entirely on milk such calves are frequently referred to as Milk-fed Calves. The term Slaughter Calves applies to those that have passed the vealer stage but have retained many of their calf characteristics. They have usually received feeds other than milk in varying amounts for a considerable period which, with increased age, changes their appearance. These differences are reflected in the characteristics of the carcasses they produce.

In comparing Vealers and Calves, grade for grade, the eyes, mouth, and nostrils of the vealers, as a rule, are smaller than those of older calves. The horn buttons are small and movable and the hide, hair, and flesh are soft to the touch. In the case of older Calves the features of the head are somewhat larger. The horns are more pronounced and more firmly set. The hair of the body and especially of the switch of the tail is longer and the flesh and hide tend to be firmer than those of Vealers. All these characteristics indicate greater maturity in Calves than is shown in Vealers.

Market Classes and Grades for Slaughter Veal Calves

Little attention is given to classes of Veal Calves in general market practice since the animals are not old enough for the sex charac-

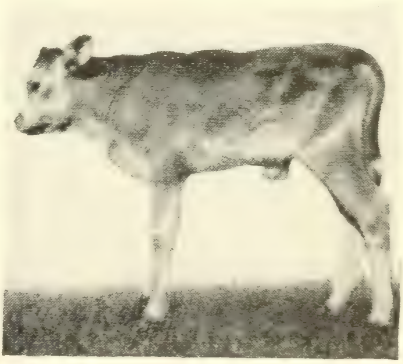
PRIME

CHOICE

GOOD

MEDIUM

COMMON



CULL

AMA 2409

FIGURE 6.—United States grades of Veal Calves.

teristics to exert any material influence on conformation, finish, and quality or relative values. The grade and weight are of primary importance in determining their values (fig. 6). Hence class distinctions in a market classification for Veal Calves are unnecessary and are rarely used. The grade and weight of Veal Calves are listed in the schedule that follows. For detailed discussion of market classes, ages, weight groups, and grades of Calves and Vealers see Circular No. 28, Market Classes and Grades of Calves and Vealers.

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER VEAL CALVES

Class	Weight group	Grade
All classes	Lightweight, 110 pounds down	Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Mediumweight, 110 to 180 pounds	Prime Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Heavyweight, 180 pounds up	Prime Choice Good Medium

Market Classes and Grades for Slaughter Calves

The market classes for Slaughter Calves are: Steer, Heifer, and Bull. In market practice, however, the younger Slaughter Calves, as is true with Veal Calves, generally are not sorted into groups

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER CALVES

Class	Weight group	Grade
Steer and heifer	Lightweight, 200 pounds down	Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Mediumweight, 200 to 300 pounds	Prime Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Heavyweight, 300 pounds up	Prime Choice Good Medium Common Cull
Bull	Lightweight, 200 pounds down	Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Mediumweight, 200 to 300 pounds	Choice Good Medium Common Cull
	Heavyweight, 300 pounds up	Choice Good Medium Common Cull

according to class for the same reason as that given for Veal Calves. Grade and weight are the important considerations in market practice. As the Calves grow older, however, more attention is given to segregations by classes, because as the animal nears the Yearling stage its sex characteristics develop and exert an increasing influence on both the animal and its carcass. (See Circular No. 28, Market Classes and Grades of Calves and Vealers.)

Market Classes and Grades for Feeder and Stocker Cattle and Calves

Feeder and Stocker Cattle and Calves are those that show evidence of ability to grow and take on additional weight and finish and that are used or are to be used for feeding or fattening purposes. When such animals are to be used for slaughter, they automatically are classified as Slaughter animals and are graded according to their respective slaughter standards.

The terms "Feeder" and "Stocker" often are used synonymously and in combination. To this extent they have lost some of their original significance.

Originally calves, yearlings, and thin older cattle capable of further growth before fattening were called Stockers. Older and thicker fleshed animals were used for immediate fattening purposes and were called Feeders. In recent years, a preference for small cuts of beef of high quality has encouraged the use of younger cattle as Feeders.

The original significance of the terms, however, has not been wholly lost. Stocker Cattle are generally those that are used for further growth and weight development. Feeder Cattle are those that are used for rapid fattening by intensive feeding.

The classes for Feeder and Stocker Cattle are: Steer, Heifer, Cow, Bull, and Stag. The classes for Feeder and Stocker Calves are: Steer, Heifer, and Bull. While the classes of young Calves intended for slaughter are relatively insignificant as a basis of values, they are important considerations when the Calves are used for Feeder and Stocker purposes. Heifers when fed along with steers of the same grade usually are finished in shorter periods of time and at lighter weights than steers. Bull calves, as a rule, are not used as Feeders because castration involves extra trouble and risk of loss.

The market values of Feeder and Stocker Cattle generally vary with the different age groups. It is the common market practice, therefore, to classify Feeder and Stocker Cattle, especially steers and heifers, according to the following general age groups: Calves, Yearlings, 2-Year-Olds, and older. Feeder and Stocker cows, bulls, and stags rarely are grouped and sold according to ages.

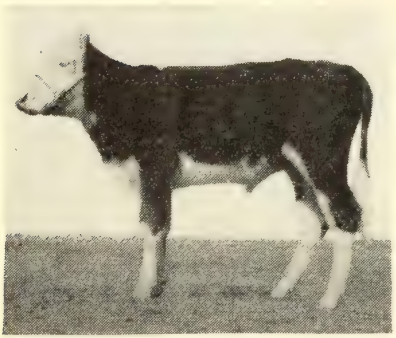
Uniform weights within specified age groups of Feeder and Stocker Cattle are important to cattle feeders because uniformity of age and weight, as a rule, determines the uniformity of the weight and uniformity in the appearance and frequently in the grade of the cattle when they are finished. Furthermore, experienced cattlemen can estimate with a fair degree of accuracy the time and quantity of feed required to finish animals of approximately uniform ages and weights. Therefore, the grouping of Feeder and Stocker Cattle according to approximately similar weights is a common market practice.

FANCY

CHOICE

GOOD

MEDIUM



COMMON

INFERIOR

AMA 1702

FIGURE 7.—United States grades of Feeder Steers.

There are six grades for Feeder and Stocker Cattle and Calves. They are: Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Inferior. (Fig. 7.)

The properly determined grade of a Feeder or Stocker animal generally indicates the grade it may attain as a finished animal. (See Technical Bulletin No. 665, Relationships Among Production and Grade Factors of Beef; Department Bulletin No. 1464, Market Classes and Grades of Cattle; and Circular No. 505, Market Classes and Grades of Feeder and Stocker Cattle.)

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR FEEDER AND STOCKER CATTLE AND CALVES

Class	Age group	Grade
Steers	Calves	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
	Yearlings	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
	2-year-olds and older	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
Heifers	Calves	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
	Yearlings	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
	2-year-olds	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
Cows	All ages	Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
Bulls and stags	All ages	Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior

MARKET CLASSIFICATIONS FOR SWINE

The term "Swine" is used to designate animals commonly known as hogs and pigs. Market hogs and pigs are grouped according to uses, classes, ages, weights, and grades.

USES

Swine are divided into two major market groups according to the immediate purposes for which they are to be used. They are Slaughter Swine and Feeder and Stocker Swine.

Slaughter Swine.—Slaughter Swine are hogs and pigs that are intended for immediate slaughter or are more suitable for slaughter than for any other purpose.

Feeder and Stocker Swine.—Feeder and Stocker Swine include all hogs and pigs that show ability to take on additional weight and finish and are traded in for Feeder and Stocker use. Although they may be more suitable for further growth and fattening than for slaughter purposes, if they are to be slaughtered in their existing condition, they are automatically classified as Slaughter Swine and graded accordingly.

CLASSES

The market classes for hogs weighing over 120 pounds are: Barrows, Gilts, Sows, Boars, and Stags. The market classes for pigs weighing from 60 to 120 pounds are Barrows, Gilts, and Boars. Pigs under 60 pounds are not separated by classes because the sex of the young animal under this weight usually has not developed sufficiently to exert an influence on its grade or value.

A **Barrow** is a castrated male swine that shows no pronounced indication of sex development similar to that of a Boar. As a class, Barrows are more evenly developed and balanced in conformation than are Sows, Stags, or Boars. The difference between Barrows and Gilts in these respects, however, is very slight.

A **Gilt** is a female swine that has not produced pigs and that has not reached an evident stage of pregnancy.

A **Sow** is a female swine that shows evidence of having produced pigs or that is in an evident stage of pregnancy.

A **Boar** is an uncastrated male swine.

A **Stag** is a castrated male swine that shows pronounced sex development or physical characteristics peculiar to the adult Boar.

AGES AND WEIGHTS

Two general age groups are used in classifying swine. They are Pigs and Hogs. Actual ages are not observed but the selection is made largely by weight in relation to the apparent age of the animal. Young animals weighing under 120 pounds are called Pigs and those weighing over 120 pounds are called Hogs.

Market prices for Pigs and Hogs, as for other market animals, usually vary materially according to the weights of the animals.

The weight of a Slaughter Hog, together with its grade, has an important influence on its yield in carcass and on the kinds and yields of the commercial cuts that can be made from its carcass and therefore on the market values of the carcass and cuts. The weights, yields, and values of the cuts change with relatively small changes in the weights of the hogs. Consequently in general market practice, hogs, as a rule, are grouped according to relatively narrow weight ranges. Boars and Stags usually are not so grouped. The weight groups most generally used are shown in the Slaughter Hog schedule.

GRADES

A market grade for Swine, as for other kinds of livestock, is a specific indication of its degrees of excellence in relation to the entire range of excellence possible for such animals. Various classes, groups, and grades are shown in the schedules for Hogs and Pigs, and are fully explained in Circular No. 569, Market Classes and Grades of Swine.

MARKET CLASSES AND GRADES FOR SLAUGHTER HOGS

The market classes for Slaughter Hogs are: Barrows, Gilts, Sows, Boars, and Stags.

The grades for Slaughter Hogs are: Choice (Fat type), Choice (Meat type), Good, Medium, and Cull (fig. 8). These grades apply more specifically to Barrows, Gilts, and Sows. As a rule, Boars and Stags are not graded. The grades for Slaughter Hogs are fully explained in Circular No. 569 Market Classes and Grades of Swine.

Significance of "Type" in the Slaughter Hog Classification.—The term "type" is used only with the Choice grade and in combination with the words "Fat" or "Meat" as "Choice (Fat type)" or "Choice (Meat type)." (fig. 9). These terms "Choice (Fat type)" (fig. 10) and "Choice (Meat type)" are used to designate and differentiate between two grades of finished Slaughter Hogs, both of which are Choice or No. 1, but the carcasses and cuts from each type are different in many respects. The carcasses have different proportions of fat to lean and produce different quantities or percentages of primal wholesale cuts of pork. The Choice (Meat-type) hog is relatively long and narrow and has a lower proportion of fat to lean than the Fat-type hog. The Choice (Fat-type) hog is wider in proportion to its length and depth and has heavier or thicker deposits of fat than the Choice (Meat-type) grade hog of the same weight.

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER HOGS

Class	Weight group	Grade
Barrows and gilts	120–140 pounds	Choice (Fat type).
	140–160 pounds	Choice (Meat type).
	160–180 pounds	Good.
	180–200 pounds	Medium.
	200–220 pounds	Cull.
	220–240 pounds	
	240–270 pounds	
	270–300 pounds	
	300–330 pounds	
	330–360 pounds	
	360–400 pounds	
	400 pounds up	
Sows	270–300 pounds	Choice (Fat type).
	300–330 pounds	Choice (Meat type).
	330–360 pounds	Good.
	360–400 pounds	Medium.
	400–450 pounds	Cull.
	450–500 pounds	
	500–600 pounds	
	600 pounds up	
Stags	All weights	Ungraded.
Boars	All weights	Ungraded.

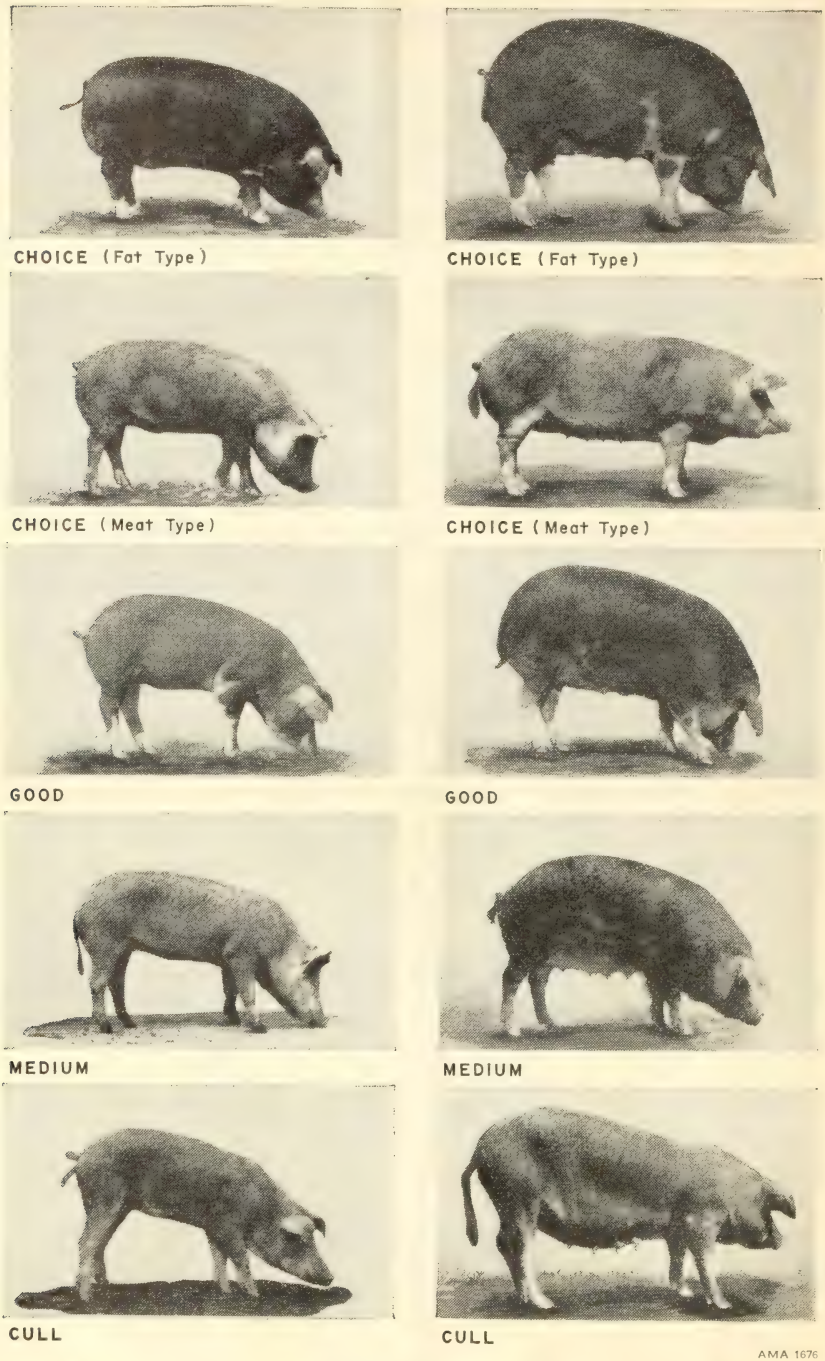


FIGURE 8.—United States grades of Slaughter Swine. Barrows and gilts, left; sows, right.

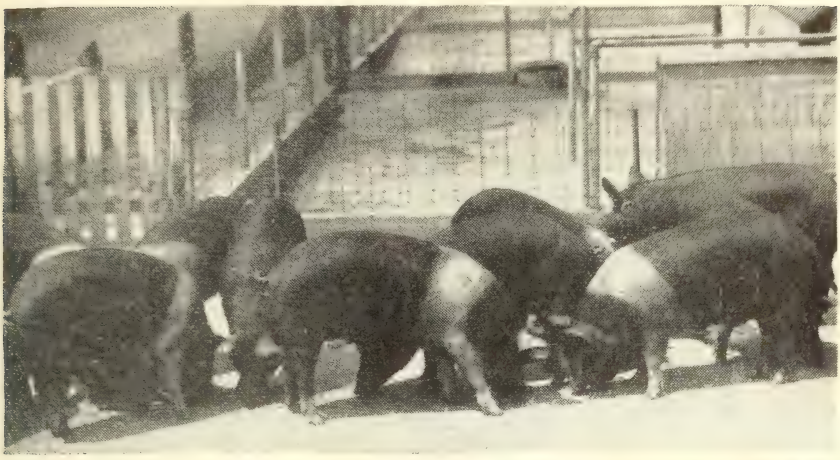


FIGURE 9.—Choice Meat-type hogs.

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FIGURE 10.—Choice Fat-type hogs.

MARKET CLASSES AND GRADES FOR SLAUGHTER PIGS

Slaughter Pigs, as the term implies, are young swine weighing under 120 pounds that are intended for immediate slaughter.

No class distinctions are made for Slaughter Pigs, including uncastrated males, that weigh under 60 pounds. Pigs, excluding uncastrated males, that weigh from 60 to 120 pounds are classified as Barrows and Gilts and sold together. Boar pigs that weigh more than 60 pounds rarely are sold for slaughter but when so marketed they are sold as Boars.

Slaughter Pigs that weigh under 60 pounds, as a rule, are not graded because they have not reached sufficient maturity for varia-

tions in their conformation, finish, and quality to cause material variations in their relative market values. Three grades usually are applied to Slaughter Pigs that weigh between 60 and 100 pounds. They are: Good, Medium, and Cull. Pigs of these weights rarely reach the degree of conformation, finish, and quality required in order to be graded Choice. Those that weigh from 100 to 120 pounds have four grades. They are: Choice, Good, Medium, and Cull. (See Circular No. 569, Market Classes and Grades of Swine.)

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER PIGS

Class	Weight group	Grade
All classes	Under 30 pounds	Ungraded
	30–60 pounds	Ungraded
Barrows and Gilts	60–80 pounds	Good
	60–80 pounds	Medium
	80–100 pounds	Cull
	100–120 pounds	Choice
	100–120 pounds	Good
	100–120 pounds	Medium
	100–120 pounds	Cull

Market Classes and Grades for Feeder and Stocker Swine

Feeder and Stocker Swine are those hogs and pigs that are intended for further development by growth and fattening. As a general rule they lack sufficient thickness and firmness of finish or fat to qualify for the better grades of slaughter animals. When such animals are used for immediate slaughter, however, they automatically are classified as Slaughter Hogs and Pigs and are graded according to the standards for slaughter animals. Normally Feeder and Stocker Pigs constitute a relatively small proportion of the total number of swine marketed annually.

There are five possible classes for Feeder and Stocker Hogs. They are: Barrows, Gilts, Sows, Boars, and Stags, and three possible classes for Feeder and Stocker Pigs. They are: Barrows, Gilts, and Boars. Barrows and Gilts are the only classes of Feeder and Stocker Swine that appear on the market in considerable numbers. Feeder and Stocker Barrows and Gilts are generally grouped together when offered for sale on the market.

The usual market weight groups for Feeder and Stocker Hogs and Pigs are relatively narrow.

The grades for Feeder and Stocker Hogs and Pigs are: Choice, Good, Medium, and Common. (See Circular No. 569, Market Classes and Grades of Swine.)

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR FEEDER AND STOCKER SWINE

Class		Weight group	Grade
Barrows and Gilts	Hogs	120–140 pounds	Choice
	Hogs	140–160 pounds	Good
	Hogs	160–180 pounds	Medium
	Pigs	80 pounds down	Common
	Pigs	80–100 pounds	
	Pigs	100–120 pounds	

MARKET CLASSIFICATIONS FOR SHEEP AND LAMBS

Sheep are ovine animals of all ages. They are divided, however, into two major groups based largely on age, namely, Lambs and Sheep. Lambs include those that are approximately 1 year of age and younger and Sheep include those that are approximately 1 year old and over. In general, the young animal that has not acquired its first pair of permanent teeth is called a Lamb whereas the older animal that has acquired the first pair of permanent teeth is called a Sheep. The first pair of permanent teeth appears when the animal is about 1 year old. The second pair appears when it is about 2 years old. During the period between the appearances of the first and second pairs of permanent teeth the animal is commonly called a Yearling Sheep. Older sheep often are called Mature Sheep or, as in the case of Breeder Ewes, are designated by their approximate ages.

In a market classification for Sheep and Lambs provision is made for dividing each of these major groups into smaller market groups, according to the purposes for which they are to be used or are most suitable, and according to classes, ages, weights, and grades.

USES

Sheep and Lambs are divided into four market groups based on the uses to be made of them or the purposes for which they are most suitable. They are: Slaughter, Feeder, Shearer, and Breeder.

Slaughter Sheep and Lambs are those intended for immediate slaughter.

Feeder Sheep and Lambs are those intended for further growth or fattening or are more suitable for this purpose than for any other.

Shearer Sheep and Lambs are those intended for shearing before use as Slaughter animals.

Breeder Sheep and Lambs are those intended for reproduction purposes.

Standard market classes and grades have been prepared only for Slaughter and Feeder Sheep and Lambs.

CLASSES

The market classes for Sheep and Lambs are: Ewes, Wethers, and Rams.

A **Ewe** is a female sheep or lamb.

A **Wether** is a male sheep or lamb that was castrated when only a few weeks old or before it had developed some of the characteristics of a mature Ram.

A **Ram** is an uncastrated male sheep or lamb. It is sometimes called a Buck.

AGES AND WEIGHTS

The age groups for lambs are indicated in a general way by the terms Hothouse Lambs, Spring Lambs, and Lambs. For sheep, they are indicated by the terms Yearling Sheep, 2-Year-Old Sheep, and Mature Sheep. Breeder Ewes are grouped as Lambs, Yearlings, 2- and 3-Year-Olds, 4-Year-Olds, and Older.

Weight is an important price factor for both sheep and lambs but it is especially important in the case of lambs. As a rule, heavy lambs (90 pounds and up) usually are in less demand on the markets than lighter weight animals of similar grade.

GRADES

The grades for Slaughter Sheep and Lambs are: Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Cull. The grades for Feeder Sheep and Lambs are: Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Inferior. The grades for Breeder Ewes are: Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, and Common. (See various schedules of market classifications for Sheep and Lambs. See also Circular No. 383 Market Classes and Grades of Lambs and Sheep for a full discussion of the grades for Sheep and Lambs.)

Market Classes and Grades for Slaughter Sheep

A **Slaughter Sheep** is an ovine animal that is 1 year old or over, or one that has cut one or more pairs of permanent teeth and is intended for immediate slaughter.

The market classes for Slaughter Sheep are: Ewes, Wethers, and Mature Sheep.

They are grouped according to ages as Yearlings, 2-Year-Olds, and Mature Sheep.

Yearlings are young sheep between approximately 1 and 2 years old or those that have cut their first pair of permanent teeth but not their second pair.

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER SHEEP

Class	Age group	Weight	Grade
Ewes	Yearling	Lightweight and handyweight, 90 pounds down.	Prime, Choice, Good
		Mediumweight, 90 to 100 pounds	Medium
		Heavyweight, 100 pounds up	Common, Cull
	Mature (2 years old and older).	Lightweight and handyweight, 120 pounds down.	Choice, Good
		Mediumweight, 120 to 140 pounds	Medium
		Heavyweight, 140 pounds up	Common, Cull
Wethers	Yearling	Lightweight and handyweight, 100 pounds down.	Prime, Choice, Good
		Mediumweight, 100 to 110 pounds	Medium
		Heavyweight, 110 pounds up	Common, Cull
	Mature (2 years old and older).	Lightweight and handyweight, 115 pounds down.	Choice, Good
		Mediumweight, 115 to 130 pounds	Medium
		Heavyweight, 130 pounds up	Common, Cull
Rams	Yearling	All weights	Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cull
	Mature (2 years old and older).	All weights	Good, Medium, Common, Cull

2-Year-Olds are sheep between 24 and 36 months old or those that have cut their second pair of permanent teeth.

Mature Sheep are those older than approximately 3 years.

The three weight groups generally observed in grouping market sheep by weights are: Lightweight, mediumweight, and heavyweight.

The grades for Slaughter Sheep are: Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Cull. (See Slaughter Sheep schedule. See also Circular No. 383, Market Classes and Grades of Lambs and Sheep for a full discussion of the grades for Slaughter Sheep.)

Market Classes and Grades for Slaughter Lambs

A **Slaughter Lamb** is a young ovine animal that has not acquired its first pair of permanent teeth and that is intended for immediate slaughter.

The market classes of Slaughter Lambs are: Ewes, Wethers, and Rams. In actual market practice, however, slaughter ewe and wether lambs usually sell together. As a rule, rams sell as a class and usually at a price discount. The general age groups for Slaughter Lambs commonly used in market practice are: Hothouse Lambs, Spring Lambs, and Lambs.

A **Hothouse Lamb** is a very young animal usually less than 3 months of age that has received special care during the short period of its life. The ewe has been fed for heavy milk production in order to produce maximum growth and finish of the lamb which usually weighs from 30 to 60 pounds when marketed.

Spring Lamb is the term applied to new-crop lambs. In some areas lambing occurs in the fall and early winter months and many of the lambs dropped during that period begin to arrive at some of the livestock markets in February or March. From then through April and into early May fed lambs from the previous year's lamb crop, also, are being marketed. Thus Spring Lamb (fig. 11) distinguishes the new-crop lambs from the old-crop lambs which at that time are known as Lambs. The rule followed in market reporting

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FIGURE 11.—Choice grade Spring Lambs.

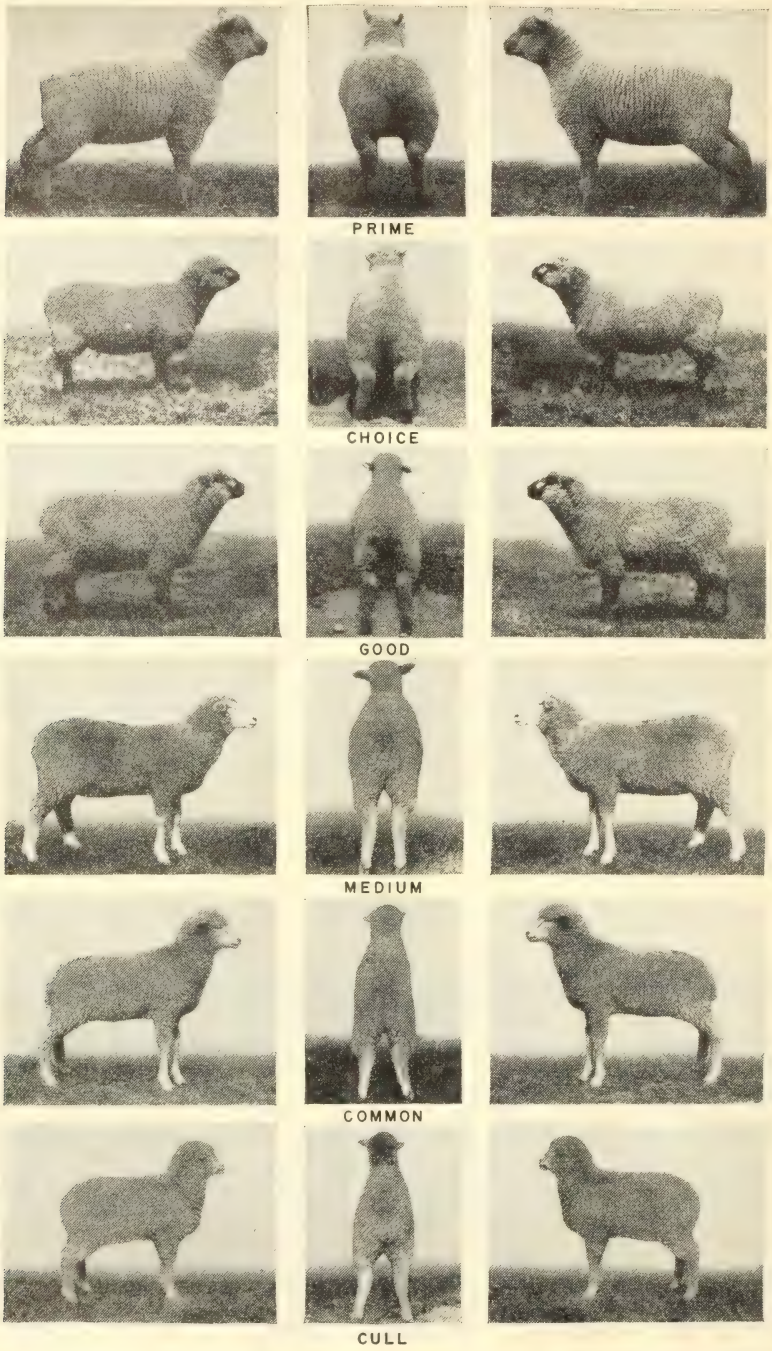

FIGURE 12.—United States grades of Slaughter Lambs.

practice is both arbitrary and practical. New-crop lambs are designated as Spring Lambs from the time they begin arriving at the livestock markets until the first Monday in October. From that date until the first Monday in July of the following year, what was formerly called Spring Lambs are designated Lambs. After the first Monday in July animals from the previous year's lamb crop are designated as Yearlings.

During the fall months the bulk of the range lambs produced in the intermountain area are marketed. In most years a relatively large proportion of these are more suitable for further feeding than for slaughter. Consequently, those lacking good flesh condition are usually purchased as Feeders and marketed during the winter and early spring months as fed lambs.

The usual market weight groups for Slaughter Lambs are: Lightweight, Mediumweight, and Heavyweight.

The grades of Slaughter Lambs are: Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Cull (fig. 12). (See schedule for Slaughter Lambs. See also Circular No. 383, Market Classes and Grades of Lambs and Sheep.)

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR SLAUGHTER LAMBS

Class	Age group	Weight	Grade
Ewes, Wethers, and Rams.	Hothouse	60 pounds down	Prime, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Cull
	Spring	Lightweight, 70 pounds down	
		Mediumweight, 70 to 90 pounds	
		Heavyweight, 90 pounds up	
	Lambs	Lightweight, 75 pounds down	
		Mediumweight, 75 to 95 pounds	
		Heavyweight, 95 pounds up	

Market Classes and Grades for Feeder Sheep and Lambs

Feeder Sheep and Lambs are those that are on feed or are to be placed on feed for further growth and fattening. When such animals are used for immediate slaughter they automatically are classified as Slaughter Sheep or Slaughter Lambs and are graded according to the grade requirements for Slaughter Sheep or Lambs, (fig. 13).

SCHEDULE: MARKET CLASSIFICATION FOR FEEDER SHEEP AND LAMBS

Class		Age group	Grade
Lambs: Ewes and Wethers		All ages	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
Sheep	Ewes and Wethers	Yearlings	Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior
	Ewes	Mature (2 years old and older)	Choice, Good, Medium, Common, Inferior

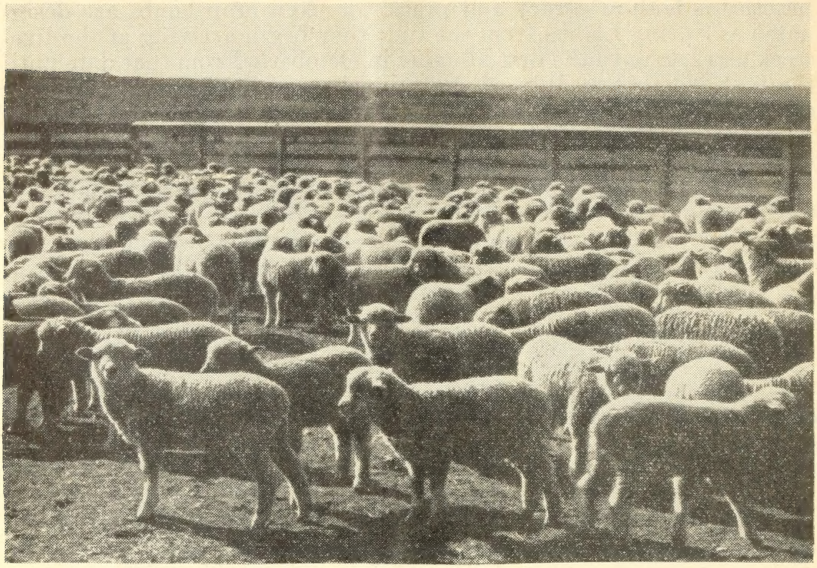

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Figure 13.—Good grade Feeder Lambs.

The grades for Feeder Sheep and Lambs are: Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, Common, and Inferior. (See Circular No. 383 Market Classes and Grades of Lambs and Sheep.)

Shearer Sheep and Lambs

The term "Shearer" refers to a rather special group of lambs and yearlings in which there is some trading in the late winter and early spring. This group consists largely of relatively well fleshed heavy shearing animals. Traders buy lambs and yearlings of this type and usually shift them to feeding stations or feeding barns located near the large central markets. Here the animals are shorn and continued on feed for a time before they are returned to the market as shorn slaughter lambs or yearlings.

Breeder Ewes

Breeder Sheep consist of Ewes of all ages that are suitable or are intended for raising lambs. They generally are classified by age groups, as Lambs, Yearlings, 2- and 3-Year-Olds and 4-Year-Olds and over, and by grades, such as Fancy, Choice, Good, Medium, and Common. Although the suitability of a Ewe for breeding purposes is of prime importance and takes into consideration its breed, health, and potentialities as a breeder, the three grade factors—conformation, finish, and quality—also are of importance and are observed when selecting breeding ewes because they tend to indicate the extent to which these same factors may be transmitted to the offspring.

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